

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY**  
**DR. S.K. MACHARIA**  
**CHAIRMAN**  
**ROYAL MEDIA SERVICES**  
**ON 9<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2012**  
**TO KENYATTA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**  
**ON**  
**BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE**

I thank the management of Kenyatta University most heartily for inviting me to this auspicious occasion to lecture to the students of this great Institution. Ever since its inception, Kenyatta University has never looked back; it has embarked and remained on a path of steady growth both physically and in its contribution to the country's educational achievement and economic development. It is nice to see your beautiful buildings and nicely groomed grounds, colourful and cheerful students' achievements.

My first sight of Kenyatta University was in 1961 when I passed by from Thika to Nairobi as a small boy and I heard it being referred to as a 'jonnies' camp.

When time came for me to enter into the compound I had accompanied retired President Moi for a graduation ceremony. That was before Prof. Mugenda became the Vice Chancellor. I came back in 2010 as Chief Guest of your annual cultural festivities which we did not complete. A hail storm came when we were just finishing the singing and dancing and preparing for the speeches that were never to be. We were scattered all around. I recall I got lost around the campus and could not find my out to Thika road.

I returned when I was being awarded by this great Institution a Doctorate degree on

---

8/12/2012. Since Prof. Mugenda took over as Vice Chancellor of this University, everybody can tell what transformation has been done. She has rebuilt into the largest Institution in Eastern Africa. Today, I want to pick on this subject of Service to Humanity as the core concern of my discussion with you. I will also touch on the role of Kenyatta University and other Universities in moulding the future of our country.

Promoting the values of servanthood was one of the key aims of the framers of Kenya's new constitution. On this central issue of service to the people, the Bible, Quran and our Constitution concur perfectly. The Bible and Quran is about God, the people, salvation and life after death.

The Constitution acknowledges “the  
Supremacy of the Almighty God of all

---

Creations.” Then it goes on to talk about the people and about creating an orderly system of government in which there will be peace, and where all people are equal and share equally in the benefits and liabilities of their nation.

The Constitution states in Article 73 1(b): “Authority assigned to State Officer vests in the State Officer the responsibility to serve the people, rather than the power to rule them”. Section 73(2) continues to state that “*the guiding principles of leadership and integrity include discipline and commitment in service to the people.*” I want to give special emphasis to the importance of the principle of servanthood in our life as a nation.

No matter what you do in business or in employment take this principle of servanthood and you will always succeed.

In life we must learn and have something that we are *“Pressing on towards”*. That should be our goal in particular you young people still in the institutions of learning. The Phrase “Pressing On” means labouring with a singleness of mind and sense of purpose to fulfil “the goal” we have set for ourselves in spite of many difficulties and obstacles that may stand the way. Service to people is a must; it is a lifetime calling whose spirit must be passed on to the future generations in the same way the Church seeks to perpetuate the doctrine of Jesus Christ.

Our education system must instill in the young generation the values of service and patriotism. I therefore appreciate Prof. Mugenda and her

---

entire team of Lecturers, Professors and all other staff members, who from this great institution continue to develop out of its students servant leaders with high skills and relevant knowledge for “quality service to humanity.”

Those of you who have been keen in observing the trend of leadership in this country know that we lost this goal a long time ago and have been busy creating and entrenching a cannibalistic system of government whose key pillars are individualism and self aggrandizement. We lost it when we allowed power to become concentrated in the hands of one man, the President, who in turn saw himself as the prime mover and the reason for the existence of this nation.

The country's economy and government institution were manipulated to serve the interests of that one person and that clique of puppets he built around himself. Politics

---

revolved around one-party rule and the party, the only one allowed to operate in Kenya by law, became the all powerful and all present goddess of Kenya.

Corruption, tribalism, graft and land grabbing became the order of the day. If you came from a background that was not politically and ethnically correct, you had little chance of accessing resources and opportunities, most of which were the prerogative of the ruling clique, to give or deny.

I have been, as you hear later on, one of those from “incorrect background.

Corporations were looted empty, education, health and other social services degenerated, industries closed down, roads became dilapidated, and crime began to soar in the urban centers in particular. The courts were manipulated left, right and centre. Justice



became the privilege of a few and our jails, those, stinking and crowded dens of horror, were teeming with “condemned” humanity.

Mass poverty set in and was to become more biting and pervasive with time. Had Christ visited Kenya at this point in time, he would never have been short of powerful images to describe hell in his teachings.

This spiraling process of national decay could not be stopped or reversed because those in power wanted it to stay. They benefited from it and thrived on it as a fly thrives on squalor.

But, you know, God loves Kenya. He inspired and strengthened those who stood up against the dictatorial government system. Kenyans have deep appreciation of the leading role the students played in the so called second liberation war. The likes of the late Alexander Muge and Manasseh Kuria, David Gitari,

---

Simon Kobia, Charles Rubia, Kenneth Matiba and the entire university student body in this country then will be remembered for their heroic role in wrestling down the KANU dragon.

On the brighter side of things, it is nice to see your beautiful buildings and nicely groomed grounds, colourful and cheerful students. As I said from the beginning about Prof. Mugenda and how she has turned this university from a small military base to a great institution of learning, I am sure that your achievements

---

have not come easily, but as a result of a long and challenging process involving good and committed leadership, thoughtful planning and perseverance.

The thought of a legacy born out of endurance and sacrifice, naturally, fills me with pleasure and satisfaction.

It contains a strong echo of my own personal life story and life experiences, a little of which I beg you kindly to allow me to share with you.

What I have achieved so far that appears to have caught the attention of many people in our country did not come to me on a silver platter. Mine has been a life of painful struggle for survival and for self advancement. I grew up in abject poverty during the colonial times.

My parents moved to white settlements in the Rift Valley where we lived in extreme poverty as squatters, before shifting to Arusha in search of greener pastures. Sadly I lost my mother at the age of five, leaving me under the care of my father and my older sisters.

My family was repatriated back to Kenya from Tanzania following an emergency colonial police swoop. Unfortunately I was left behind in Arusha. When time came for me to return home I traversed the vast Maasai grazing fields, in a trek that lasted nearly two years and finally ended up Thika purely by accident.

Finally, I rejoined my family in Ndakaini where we continued to live in dire poverty.

My struggle to resume education was a highly challenging one. My older sister Njeri, had to be married off to quite an elderly man for my father to raise my school fees. It was because of her that I was able to attain primary and intermediate school education. She repeatedly jokes that I was responsible for her not going to school.

The story of how I struggled to complete my primary education and my teacher training education before casting my eyes abroad for higher education is too long and detailed to be narrated here. It is enough for me to say that I failed to gain admission to a secondary school and ended up at Kahuhia Teacher Training

College where I obtained my P3 Teacher Training Certificate. This was then the lowest grade for a trained teacher. My thirst for higher education was unquenchable. I did everything I could and at last I got booked on one of the so called 'Mboya flights' to America to join a college by the name of Seattle Pacific College in Washington State.

However when time for me to travel to America came, I missed the plane because my father could not raise the Kshs.4,000 required for the trip. At last the opportunity for me to travel did come and my journey to say the least, turned out to be quite dramatic.

I took off from Ambassador Hotel in Nairobi by bus, believing I was headed for Embakasi, now known as JKIA.

Little did I know that I would be on that bus to eternity. It travelled to Kampala, Juba in Southern Sudan, across the Sahara desert to Benghazi on the northern tip of Libya. I crossed the Mediterranean Sea by ship to Europe, then crossed Europe by bus to the English Channel and later took a boat to Dover. From Dover I went by train to London and eventually by plane to New York. From New York I took a bus to Seattle 8,000 miles across the States of America; it took me 140 days to arrive in Seattle, Washington State at a cost of Kshs.1,200.

I successfully completed my studies by going to school during the day and working at night to raise school fees for the seven years that I was in the US. And then, as fate would have it, a team of government officials from Kenya came to the US in 1968 to recruit students for jobs in the civil service of the newly independent nation.

Luckily, I was one of those recruited and this time the government paid my air ticket back to Kenya. At least I didn't take a bus back home.

As a student in the US, I was young and adventurous. Myself and the late Peter Waweru (God rest his soul), who was at one time the Executive Director of the ICDC had an interesting incident that I would like to tell you about.



One day, five of us, all students from Seattle decided to travel to Eugene in Oregon, hundreds of miles away while none of us had a car. We thought very hard on how we could get a car without having to buy or hire. By then in America, it was possible for a car dealer to let you have a car for a day or two for a test drive before committing yourself to buying it. We decided to get one pretending to be potential buyers, use it to travel to Oregon, and then return it with an explanation that it did not meet our criteria.

Our scheme worked well and we set off for Oregon. But, you know, Satan is not perfect in his schemes and he always leaves behind loopholes through which those who obey him must get caught.

Now listen:

At some point, in the dead of the night and in unfamiliar territory, the car broke down. The worst had happened we had no money; we could not even hire a mechanic. The most practical solution then was to abandon the car and hitchhike back to Seattle hoping the law would not catch up with us since we were all African students and nobody knew us. It was a big risk but we decided to take the chance.

As I said Satan is imperfect. Three months later, all of us were picked up by the police from different places. It was unbelievable when we all met at a police station one morning at 8am. We were under arrest and within no time we were led to a court of law and charged with theft of a motor vehicle. At such a time, you only wish the earth below would open up and swallow you whole!!

The US is an incredible country. There, the law works, and justice and human rights are observed to the letter. Once in the court, the judge asked us what language we would like to be tried in and to defend ourselves. We said we wanted to be tried in Kikuyu. A date was fixed for the hearing and the prosecutor was ordered to bring a Kikuyu interpreter who he said was hard to find, but the judge insisted.

On the hearing day, the prosecutor told the judge that there was no Kikuyu interpreter in the US. This made the judge very furious. He rebuked the prosecutor: “How could you drag into court young men who had come all the way from Africa to seek education in America under the pretext that they had stolen a car?”

Can you hear me? They have denied it and I believe them.” he said. “Case dismissed!”

I sometimes laugh to myself whenever I remember this incident. First, I ask myself, what would have happened had this occurred in a Kenyan Court where Courts are manipulated all the time and the law is bent at will. This incident also reinforces my faith in the legal system, rule of law in the US and its respect for human rights.

Given Kenya's New Constitution, we all expect the Kenyan Judicial system to achieve the same high standards that I witnessed in the US back in the 60s. There is every reason to believe that this will be the case now that Kenya has a Supreme Court under the able leadership of Chief Justice Willy Mutunga.

The process of the vetting of Judges currently going on in Kenya is highly encouraging. For Kenya to develop economically, we have no alternative but to have a sound judicial system.

A country that is not based in democracy and the rule of law is doomed to fail. This has been my experience in Kenya between 1980 and early 2000 and for this reason I and the Royal Media Services had to be at the forefront of the struggle to give this country a new constitution.

Each of us is born with his or her natural ambitions, desires and dreams. I started translating my dreams into reality as soon as I arrived back in Kenya from the US. Remember Kenya had been independent for only five years when I returned. The nation was young and business opportunities were generally unlimited. The first idea that came to my mind was that of matatu business.

With the little money I had saved in the US, I paid Shs.1,000 as ten per cent deposit for a loan to buy a new car, Shs.2,000 as ten per cent deposit for a house at Moi Estate in Langata and also paid Shs.2,000 to CMC as a deposit for a VW matatu which was to operate between Nairobi, Thika and Ndakaini around Ndakaini Dam, my home village.

But matatus being what they are, mine crashed twice in a duration of three months. The third crash occurred in the fifth month and although there were no fatalities, the crash left one passenger without a leg. That was enough for me and that line of business came to an end.

Next in line was Tina's Bar and Restaurant on Moi Avenue. This was a landmark in Nairobi and a household name. I made some good money out of it but it was very demanding in terms of time. I needed to be there physically at the bar after work till one in the morning and still be required to be on my government job at seven am. I sold the bar business. Time could not allow.

Then, myself and two of my friends, one working as a cashier in a bank and the other in a tourist hotel in Nairobi thought of running a taxi business to be stationed at the hotel. The first incident with the taxi was when the exhaust system broke down and the driver decided to carry the exhaust pipe to my partner at the bank.



When the partner saw the driver with the pipe on his shoulders, he was alarmed and went into hiding behind the counter since he did not want the bank to associate him with taxi business. He called us for a meeting after work the same day where we fired the driver and employed a new one. Within the week, the partner at the hotel assigned the new driver a hotel guest who required to be dropped at Thika and that was the last time we saw the driver and the taxi. Years later we were told the taxi had been found in a trench in Nanyuki and had been overgrown by bushes.

While working for the ADC in the 70s, my boss and I travelled to Italy to study the cross breeding of buffalos with cows for meat production. While there we came across a family that used waste paper, to manufacture toilet paper using an old machine operated by hand. I carried with me from the family a roll of toilet paper and it is from here that the idea of Madhupaper was born.

Some of you might be familiar with what followed in the later years resulting in the undeserved takeover of Madhupaper from my family and not paid for it. The story is too long and complex to be told here.

I am sure all of you are eagerly waiting to hear how the idea of Royal Media Broadcasting started. It is equally a long and interesting story full of surprises and not possible for me to tell the whole story here and now. In fact the whole story can only be told satisfactorily in a book. However, I will give a short story of how it all began.

No doubt you all recall the first multi party general elections of 1992. Then, retired President Moi was the one in office campaigning to be re-elected. The opposition, in existence for the first time, was determined to remove President Moi from office. To be precise, the candidates contesting for the office were the late Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, Hon. Kenneth Njindo Matiba and Hon. Mwai Kibaki, Kenya's president today.

My candidate whom I campaigned for so hard was the late Jaramogi Oginga Odinga. I personally paid many radio and television commercials to KBC in his support but since KBC was the only broadcasting house in the country entirely owned by the government all the commercials that I paid for were not aired. I tried to get a refund of my money but in vain. However, in spite of this, I still believed that my candidate would win.

Unfortunately the opposition lost that election, my candidate managing a poor fourth. When this happened, I lost my senses and was in shock. When I recovered I told myself that my candidate had failed because my radio and TV commercials in his support were not aired.

I made up my mind that I would never allow this to happen again.

Immediately I wrote a letter to KBC demanding to be given a broadcasting license. Little did I know that KBC was only a broadcaster and not a licensing authority. The then KBC MD called me over the telephone and I could hear him laughing loudly and mockingly at me. He kept on telling me that I had written to the wrong party. I begged him to tell me whom I should write to requesting for a license and he told me it was the Office of the President, which I did.

I received a reply from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting which prior to this did not exist. The letter was signed by the then PS, Mr. Andere. Mr. Andere is still alive and most likely he is listening and viewing this “live” Citizen TV broadcast. It was a one-line letter which I quote:

“You cannot be allowed to broadcast private radio and television in Kenya”.

I replied to Mr. Andere giving him seven days to give me a license or else I would seek legal redress. He did not respond to my letter. After the seven days, I instructed my lawyers Gibson Kamau Kuria, Kiraitu and Ringera Advocates, to go to court and demand for a broadcasting license.

After four years of court battles, we obtained a court order in our favor ordering the government to issue a radio and television broadcasting license. The government resistance continued and at times brutally prevented the enforcement of this court order, to the extent of causing bodily harm to both myself and my wife. At last I was issued with a Radio and Television broadcasting licence and in 1998, they were both On-Air. However it was closed down in January 2000 and re-opened in August of the same year.

One day in April 2001, at about 3am, the government sent teams of GSU armed with AK47s to Ambank House in Nairobi where the studios were located and to all our transmission sites in Karen, Nyambene in Meru, Nyeri Hill and Londiani Hill in Nakuru, simultaneously destroying all the equipment they found, and our radio and television stations were put off air. This time the government was determined that the destruction it will accomplish, there shall never be again Citizen and Television.



It took me one more year of negotiations and court battles to allow the stations to be re-opened. By then the Moi regime had been replaced by a more democratic government and were allowed to operate freely. From these difficult times and circumstances, Royal Media Services was born and grew to what it is today.

In January 2003, Royal Media Services had only 24 employees. Today, as we sit here, Royal Media Services has 940 full time employees and others who indirectly work with the company. The company broadcasts Citizen Television which is viewed in Kenya by more than 50 per cent of the country's television viewers and also viewed in Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania and lately in Zambia.

Royal Media Services has 14 radio stations; two of them in Kiswahili, Radio Citizen, the largest listened to radio in East and Central Africa and Bahari FM. Twelve others are vernacular radio stations. Each major community in Kenya today listens to a radio in its own mother tongue. Of the 40 million Kenyans today, 85 per cent listen and view one or the other of the Royal Media stations.

Kenyans today are very well educated socially, politically and economically and get to know everything that happens each day from one or the other of Royal Media stations in a language they understand best.

The promulgation of the new constitution in 2010 was the culmination of a bitter war fought for many years to bring about democracy, Justice and good governance in Kenya. Royal Media went to the greatest extent possible to campaign for the acceptance of the constitution during the referendum of 2010. Our greatest desire is for Kenya to have a government that recognizes the importance and the primacy of the people of this nation. We want a government that realizes that the people are the rulers and state officials the servants of our nation.

It is the duty of our universities to not only enrich the country's knowledge base but to also sharpen its collective moral conscience and its sense of moral responsibility. Time is long gone when universities served as ivory towers of knowledge removed from contamination by the general public. The university must come down to the level of the people and help to diagnose and correct the maladies afflicting the society at large.

For those in this hall, who believe in Christianity, they know He never tried to seek shelter or safety away from the crowds that were milling around him. He came into them, dwelt in their midst and for three good years did nothing but teach, feed, heal and console them. Mercy was the quality that characterized his attitude towards them. The universities must do likewise. Serving the people with a sense of love and care ought to be the guiding spirit of the work of the

institutions of higher learning such as Kenyatta University.

Be men and women of character, wisdom and sound judgment. Do not allow the obstacles in your way to kill your dream of building your vision. Kenya is banking on you for the future and as the Bible says, he that endures to the end shall be saved.

Your success will depend on the degree of knowledge, courage, determination and discipline that you will have acquired from this institution in addition to your own initiatives and other inborn qualities.

In conclusion, I must once again commend this University for the great vision and sense of commitment of those who run it, and for the

service the University continues to lend to our nation.

May the Almighty God bless the work of your hands and continue to make Kenyatta University a centre of excellence and a fountain of hope for Kenya.

When I was invited for this lecture/discussion by your able Vice Chancellor Prof. Mugenda I was told that I had two assignments;

One, to give you my entrepreneurial history in the first 30 minutes. What I have done this far is just to give you some tips of my life and efforts, to encourage you and confirm to you that you do not need to have some miracles of rich parents for you to succeed in life. You can be everything you are determined to be.

Two, I was told that 40 minutes are reserved for all of you in this hall to ask me questions on business perspectives in Kenya, which I will, if asked, respond from my experience.

I am ready to be grilled. Ask any question and do not shy out?